

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A messaging system comprising:
 - at least one host computer, said host computer comprising a messaging platform upon which messaging applications are executed and a message store for storing messages received by said messaging platform;
 - at least one network interface unit (NIU) having a first interface to the messaging platform on the host computer for communicating between said NIU and said messaging platform and a second interface to a telephone network for receiving calls from said telephone network, and an internal bus coupled to a first module having said first interface and coupled to a second module having said second interface; and
 - at least one embedded services processor unit (ESP), located within the NIU, coupled to said internal bus supporting communications with said first module and said second module of said NIU, said ESP comprising a processor, a memory, an operating system executing on said processor for executing software applications that are otherwise incapable of executing within said NIU, and a network interface that supports an IP protocol for communicating between said ESP and a network external to said messaging system, the network connecting to at least one remote external server computer, wherein the remote external server computer provides multi-media processing for the messaging platform.
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Original) The system recited in claim 1, wherein said operating system of said ESP operating system comprises Microsoft Windows NT.
4. (Cancelled)
5. (Previously Presented) The system recited in claim 1, wherein said bus implements the Multibus (IEEE 1296) open bus standard.

6. (Original) The system recited in claim 5, wherein said ESP communicates to other NIU interfaces using messaging protocols and standards in accordance with said Multibus (IEEE 1296) open bus standard.

7. (Previously Presented) The system recited in claim 1, wherein said ESP is capable of cooperating with commercially available messaging system hardware and operating system commodity software.

8. (Currently Amended) In a messaging system having a host computer coupled to a network interface unit (NIU), wherein the host computer comprises a messaging platform upon which messaging applications are executed, and wherein the NIU has a first interface to the messaging platform on the host computer for communicating between said NIU and said messaging platform and a second interface to a telephone network for receiving calls from said telephone network, a method comprising the steps of:

accessing an embedded services processor unit (ESP) within the NIU that is operatively coupled to the first and second interfaces of the NIU, said ESP comprising a processor, a memory, an operating system executing on said processor for executing software applications and a network interface to an external network;

executing software applications on said ESP that are otherwise incapable of executing within said NIU, and

executing at least one multimedia application for the messaging platform on an external server computer remotely located on said external network;

wherein said first interface resides on a first module in the NIU and said second interface resides on a second module in the NIU, the modules and said ESP being interconnected via an internal bus.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously Presented) The method recited in claim 8, wherein said accessing step further comprises initializing said ESP to cooperate with components of said messaging system and to communicate with said external network.

11. (Previously Presented) The method recited in claim 8, wherein executing at least one multimedia application comprises using an IP communication protocol to transfer data between said ESP and said external server computer on said external network.

12 – 15 (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) The method recited in claim 1, wherein said ESP is capable of engaging a variety of operating states comprising any of: RESET, IDLE, INITIALIZING, UN-PENDING, RUNNING, and SHUTDOWN.

17. (Previously Presented) The method recited in claim 16, wherein said RESET state may be invoked by any of said other operating states.

18. (Previously Presented) The method recited in claim 8, wherein said ESP is capable of engaging a variety of operating states comprising any of: RESET, IDLE, INITIALIZING, UN-PENDING, RUNING, and SHUTDOWN.

19. (Previously Presented) The method recited in claim 18, wherein said RESET state may be invoked by any of said other operating states.